

What is claimed is:

487 1. A server with a competitive game program and virtual game player list stored therein, providing on network a competitive game service to a plurality of game  
5 players' terminals via communication lines, the server comprising:

setting means of setting such that, under the condition that the number of competitors against the game players is below a predetermined number when the game players receive the competitive game service via the terminals, the competitive game program is activated to play the competitive game with the game players; and

10 notification means of notifying, as a competitor, a virtual game player's name previously entered on the virtual game player list, to the game players who are to play the competitive game with the competitive game program by the setting means.

15 2. The server providing the competitive game according to claim 1, wherein the notification means selects a number of game players lacking for the competitive game from plural virtual game players previously entered on the virtual game player list, and sends, as a competitor's name, the virtual game players' names of the selected game players to the game players' terminals.

20 3. A program storage medium used in a server with a competitive game program and virtual game player list stored therein, providing on network a competitive game service to a plurality of game players' terminals via communication lines, the program storage medium comprising:

25 a setting program of setting such that, under the condition that the number of

competitors against the game players is below a predetermined number when the game players receive the competitive game service via the terminals, the competitive game program is activated to play the competitive game with the game players; and

5 a notification program of notifying, as a competitor, a virtual game player's name previously entered on the virtual game player list, to the game players who are to play the competitive game with the competitive game program by the setting program.

4. The program storage medium according to claim 3, wherein the  
10 notification program selects a number of game players lacking for the competitive game from plural virtual game players previously entered on the virtual game player list, and sends, as a competitor's name, the virtual game players' names of the selected game players to the game players' terminals.

15 5. A method of providing on network a competitive game service to a plurality of game players' terminals via communication lines, by using a server with a competitive game program and virtual game player list stored therein, the method comprising the steps of:

20 setting such that, under the condition that the number of competitors against the game players is below a predetermined number when the game players receive the competitive game service via the terminals, the competitive game program is activated to play the competitive game with the game players; and

25 notifying, as a competitor, a virtual game player's name previously entered on the virtual game player list, to the game players who are to play the competitive game with the competitive game program in the setting step.

6. The method of providing the competitive game service according to claim 5, wherein the notification step including the step of:

selecting a number of game players lacking for the competitive game from plural virtual game players previously entered on the virtual game player list, and

sending, as a competitor's name, the virtual game players' names of the selected game players to the game players' terminals.